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NSC BRIEFING

5 March 1958

ITALY (short)

- I. Two recent issues have led to bitter church-state conflict in Italy.
- II. On 1 March court convicted Bishop of "criminal defamation of character" for denouncing as public sinners couple married in civil ceremony instead of Church.
  - A. Newspapers taking strong stand on one side or other.
  - B. Situation poses dilemma for Christian Democrats.
    1. Zoli said on 3 March he was "sorry as a Catholic, but thinks justice must take its course."
- III. An anti-Vatican article written by former French diplomat Peyrefitte in 23 February pro-Communist Paese Sera. This drew a Vatican protest to Italian government.
  - A. Foreign Trade Minister Carli, the only independent in the Christian Democratic cabinet, reportedly offered his resignation--it was refused--after sending cordial letter to Peyrefitte, a personal friend.
    1. If Vatican presses the issue it may still do the Christian Democrats harm in elections.
- IV. Church-State relations likely to be explosive issue in elections to Chamber of Deputies to be held probably in May or June.
  - A. Church-State issue will hurt Christian Democrats.
    1. Probable Christian Democrats will not receive majority.
    2. Therefore, new government will probably be a continuation of present minority one-party government or a shaky coalition.
  - B. Monarchists will probably benefit most from Christian Democratic losses.

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NSC BRIEFING

5 March 1968

**BACKGROUND PIECE ON ITALY**

**I. The trial of the Bishop.**

- A. Bishop of Prato irritated by increasing number of civil marriages.
- B. Mario Bellandi, baptized Catholic but professed atheist married 12 August 1956, in civil ceremony only, Loris Munziati, who had been a practicing Catholic.
  - 1. Bishop had warned bride to no avail.
- C. Bishop published pastoral letter read to faithful on 12 August 56 stating civil marriage not marriage but "beginning of scandalous concubinage," calling couple public sinners, and refusing Munziati all sacraments.
- D. Bellandi whose health had been undermined as prisoner of war and who suffered paralytic stroke month after marriage, filed suit for defamation.
- E. Bishop,  refused to attend trial beginning Florence 23 February, on grounds civil court lacked jurisdiction.
- F. 1 March Bishop found guilty of defamation of character, given suspended fine of \$65 and ordered to pay trial costs.
- G. 4 March Bishop's lawyers appealed sentence. This is being interpreted as recognition of the court's jurisdiction.

**II. Party strengths in present chamber:**

| <u>Party</u>          | <u>Seats (total 590)</u> | <u>% Popular vote 1953</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Communists            | 142                      | 22.7                       |
| Socialists            | 75                       | 12.7                       |
| Democratic Socialists | 19                       | 4.5                        |
| Republicans           | 5                        | 1.6                        |
| Christian Democrats   | 261                      | 40.7                       |
| Radicals              | 1                        | —                          |
| Liberals              | 13                       | 3.0                        |
| Monarchists           | 39                       | 6.9                        |
| Neo-Fascists          | 25                       | 5.9                        |

*There are 10 unaffiliated members*

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